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COMPLETION OF
COLERIDGE'S CHRISTABEL

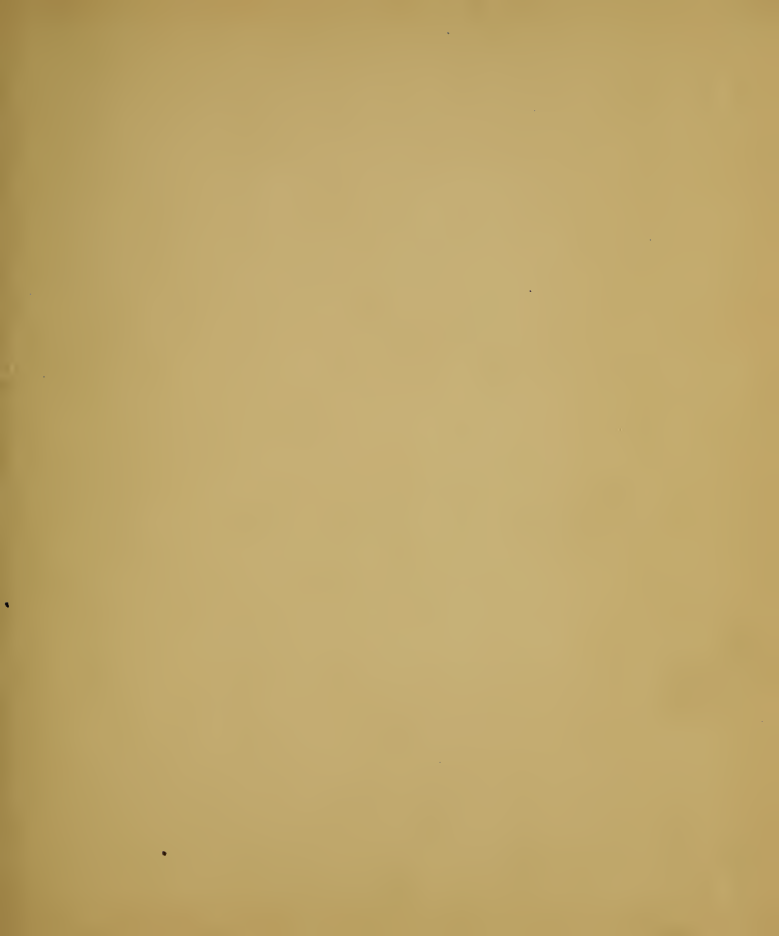
WILLIAM TURK





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COMPLETION OF
COLERIDGE'S CHRISTABEL

And Other Poems

BY

WILLIAM TURK



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PREFACE.

In carrying on to completion Coleridge's fragmentary poem, *Christabel*, and thus setting my own work in antithetical approximation to his, I am sensible of the dangerous ground upon which I am treading. Yet as the adventurer, in full knowledge of the dangers he must run, will continue in the pleasing excitement of the hazard he pursues, so I, despite a prescience of almost certain failure, entered upon this venture in happy indifference to everything but the pleasure in the work. I have no other plea to offer for the reason of the undertaking.

In the preface to his *Christabel*, Coleridge says that he had nothing but his own indolence to blame for writing only two out of the five parts planned, and trusts he "will yet be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come." He left the poem so incomplete that no one can tell how he intended to end it. Consequently, I had to construct the remaining part of the plot, and, dove-tailing it with the fragment of his own, proceed upon original ground of work. At the demands of the story I was compelled to add three more personages to the primary number of four.

As to the verse, I have used the same meter that Coleridge used, occasionally varying the processional tramp of iambic lines by the insertion of a trochaic, and sometimes breaking over the prevailing tetrameters into a pentameter, or lapsing into a trimeter. I have also continued the practice of writing little conclusions to the parts of the poem. These, I may add incidentally, were the hardest of all for me to write, presumably because, partak-

ing of a lyric quality, they were somewhat aside from the bias of my knack at writing.

For those who may not have read the original fragment of *Christabel*, I prefix a *resume* of its argument.

One night in "the month before the month of May" Christabel was in the wood "a furlong from the castle gate," praying underneath the old oak tree "for the weal of her lover that's far away." Suddenly hearing a moaning near her, she sprang up, and, stealing to the other side of the oak, found a "damsel bright, dressed in a silken robe of white," and "beautiful exceedingly." In answer to Christabel's question, the damsel replied that her name was Geraldine, and said further that five warriors had seized her yesternorn, and, tying her on a palfrey's back, had ridden to the old oak tree, where one of them placed her, saying "he would return in haste."

Christabel helped fair Geraldine to rise, and led her to the castle, beseeching her to share her couch for the night. She also assured Geraldine that the service of her father, Sir Leoline, was at her command, and that their

"stout chivalry

Should guide and guard her safe and free
Home to her noble father's hall."

When they crossed the court the mastiff, which

"Never till now had uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel,"

moaned angrily as she lay asleep in her kennel.

After Christabel and Geraldine had gone silently and unmolested through the passages of the castle, and arrived at the former's room, they had some talk concerning Christabel's mother, who had died when her child was born. Sud-

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denly Geraldine stared vacantly into the air and cried:

“Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!

I have power to bid thee flee.”

And soon again:

“Off woman, off! this hour is mine—

Though thou her guardian angel be,

Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.”

Christabel tenderly sought to console her, and soon Geraldine

“wiped her moist cold brow

And faintly said, ‘Tis over now!’”

But the fair damsel proved to be a witch in disguise, and that night obtained a magic influence over the sleeping Christabel. Next morning when Christabel led Geraldine into the presence room of Sir Leoline, and he learned the damsel's father was Sir Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine, he became pale. “They had been friends in youth,” but on account of a quarrel “had parted,—ne'er to meet again.” Their mutual affection had survived, however, and both had been unhappy for years.

This chance meeting with the daughter of his quondam friend found Sir Leoline ready to renew the old acquaintance, and he waxed wroth when told of Geraldine's abduction, and vowed revenge upon the perpetrators. In a moment of tenderness he took her into his arms, and

“A vision fell

Upon the soul of Christabel.

*

*

*

*

*

Again she saw that bosom old,

Again she felt that bosom cold,

And drew in her breath with a hissing sound,

Whereat the knight turned wildly round,"

but, seeing nothing unusual, asked what ailed his beloved child, and his daughter could only answer "all will yet be well."

Then calling Bard Bracy, Sir Leoline told him to guide the fair Geraldine home to her father, and to acquaint him of his (Sir Leoline's) repentance. But on the night before Bracy had had a vision in which he had seen Christabel in the wood pitilessly trammelled in the coils of a snake. Fearful of evil consequences he had vowed that day

"With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Sir Leoline dismissed his forebodings with a jest, and again kissed the forehead of fair Geraldine. The latter looked at Christabel furtively and askance and with such intensity of malice that the face of the gentle maiden, in her weakness to resist the evil influence of the beautiful witch, unconsciously took on the selfsame expression. Her father beheld the look, and, wrongly ascribing it to jealousy, felt that his old age and hospitality had been dishonored by his only child. Still more "his heart was cleft with rage and pain" when Christabel fell at his feet, and, unable to tell the real meaning of her action, entreated him by her mother's soul to send the woman away. After a few moments of utter confusion and silent rage he ordered Bracy from the room,

"And, turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight Sir Leoline
Led forth the lady Geraldine."

COMPLETION OF
COLERIDGE'S CHRISTABEL

PART THIRD.

I ween a gentle maiden sweet
Can ill such cruel treatment meet.
E'en where she fell fair Christabel lay
With all her senses fled away,
And pale and still as still could be,
A fair yet painful sight was she.
Thus she lay as she were dead,
 Until her brain came back again
 To the full knowledge of her pain,
And to her chamber fast she fled,
 A bitter sorrow in her breast.
In tears she sank upon her bed,
And, though at times a spell of peace
Would bring her respite and surcease,
 Yet no abiding ease or rest
 Found her sweet spirit so distressed.
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine,
And, choosing a noble escort train,

Placed her on a palfrey vain,
And gave her to Bard Bracey's care
To ride beside her, guide her rein,
And carry home the lady fair.
"And tell, Bard Bracey," Sir Leoline spake,
"Her noble father for my sake
The years ago since last we met
Have cost me sorrow and regret,
And that, repenting, fain am I
To meet again before I die

The comrade of my youthful heart,
And bind once more the sacred tie

Our youthful fury rent apart."
Then spake the knight to Geraldine,
But ill, I ween, could he divine
What deep impatience all the while
Lurked beneath her modest smile,
And how her heart once more felt free
When his last farewell ended he.

The train its journey then began;
Bard Bracy was the one sad man,
And all the rest wore free and fair
The gentle air, the gladsome air
That, smiling on them everywhere,

Nature invited them to wear.
Smooth was the road, the trees beside
Were flowering in their springtime pride;
Their leaves, yet moist with morning dew,
Like diamonds glittered to the view.
The feathered singer's morning song
The gale took pleasure to prolong;
No creature was worthy of Nature's scorn,—
All were favorites of the morn.
Fair Geraldine, her palfrey sat
As one who had the graces pat,
 And deftly did she spur and guide,
And tartly bandied gibe and chat
 With the fair youths who rode beside.
Her beauty in the glancing light
Seemed fallen from heaven upon their sight,
And when she smiled and when she spoke
Ecstatic longing in them woke.
Onward they rode, the talk still flowed,
And she and they showed little care
For gentle Bracy's saddened air.
His harp he held within his hand,
 And the train had not proceeded long
 Ere they insisted for a song,

And grew so urgent their demand

He yielded to the pressing throng.

The air he played was light yet sad,

A plaintive warbling of mated birds ;

The song, (the sweetest that he had,)

Was clothed in airy, careless words,

And yet breathed out, despite its dress,

A catching plaint of soul-distress.

But the mood of the train was gay and glad,

And they hinted the song was all too sad,

And Geraldine requested one

Of gayer mood and lighter tone ;

And the minstrel Bard, with cast down pride,

Was urged and pressed till he complied.

Full glad was the Bard with rising cheer

When the journey's end was drawing near.

O'er Irthing Flood the journey went,

Up Knorren Moor without event,

And time and space unnoticed flew

Till Halegarth wood appeared in view.

Thick were the trees, and twined o'erhead,

And gloomed the road that through them led ;

And when the chatting caravan

To tread its labyrinth began,

A mutual shudder crept along,
And stilled the laugh and hushed the song.
For all observed with keenness fine
A change come over Geraldine,
And how in such a little space
The bright smile faded from her face,
And their instead a sternness came
That, shedding round the lovely dame
Its chilling influence withal,
Checked the gaiety of all.
None might divine and none might know
What made the lady alter so,
For all upon her features read
It was not born of fear and dread,
But rather still she wore the air
Of one not unfamiliar there.
With look of confidence and pride
They saw her glance from side to side.
At length when they passed from the sombre reign
Beyond to the cheering light again,
So deeply was the chill impressed
On all the train that, how they tried,
None could regain his former zest,
Nor what he felt within him hide;

And the rest of the journey, though brighter the air,
Was passed in silence broken rare.

 Soon cried the lady Geraldine,
And pointed with her finger fine
Where Langdale Hall, her father's home,
Dimly through the foliage shown.
Bard Bracy brought his harp to bear,
And played a shrill and merry air,
Till soon the echoes of the strain
Reached Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine,
And forth he came without delay
To meet the party on their way.
An old and white-haired man was he;
On his features you might see

 How glad surprise lit up his eyes,
And gave to all a welcome free.
However bent his form was now,
However furrowed was his brow,
There lingered still a noble trace
About his figure and his face.

 The minstrel lighted from his selle,
And with salute advanced to tell
His explanation fair and meet;—
How Geraldine, his daughter sweet,

At midnight by the castle bell
Was found in the wood by Christabel,
And taken to Sir Leoline,
Who in the early morning shine
Had chosen the minstrel and his train
To guide the lady home again.
And then the gentle minstrel told

 The words Sir Leoline had said,—
How when the past before him rolled
 His heart within him beat and bled;
And by his honor he did say
That he repented of the day
When he spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine,
And that once more he longed to know
The friend he loved so long ago.
Sir Roland listened in surprise,

 His aged countenance aglow,
And when he spoke the tears were in his eyes:—
“Bard Bracy, let thy master know
That I have felt repentance, too,
 But pride wrought hard to stifle pain;
And that full often to my view
 His form in youth has come again—”

But lo! with shrinking look of pain
Ceased speaking Sir Roland of Tryermaine,
And turned a face of suppliant fear
To where his daughter sat anear,
Who, cheeks aflame and eyes afire,
Regarded stern her aged sire.

What could it mean?—A father gray
Held beneath a daughter's sway?
A child so fair, yet vile of soul
As thus her parent to control?
The company could only stare,
And wounded countenances wear;
And they to greater wonder woke
When Geraldine, alighting, spoke:—

“I cannot think of ought to gain
By holding this weary parley vain;
And well I trow 'tis best for thee
To cease thy speech and come with me.”
She wore a look of high command,

And more implied than she did say;
She took her father by the hand,
And to the castle led the way.

No further parley did she deign
To minstrel Bracy or his train,

But left them in amazement strong
While she her father led along.
A comely youth who sat his steed
 As one who, struck by strong surprise,
 Is roughly in a trice made wise,
Spoke to his comrade to take heed:
“Though she seems gentle and so fair,
Methinks it ’hooves us to beware;
Her heart is false, and well I trow
She hath the power to work us woe.”
The gentle minstrel, sad at heart,
Reined round his palfrey to depart,
And, followed by the youthful train,
Returned in silence home again.

Now speech was short and words were few,
For all were silent with surprise,
And lively charms of nature drew

 But small attention from their eyes.
Right glad they were when far ahead
They marked the castle rise to view.
The moat they reached, and to the ground
Bard Bracy vaulted with a bound,
Crossed o’er the bridge and court withal
To enter straight the castle tall,

And, glancing neither left nor right
Sought for Sir Leoline the knight.

In a fit of surliness and gloom
Sir Leoline sat in his room,
And much he did in spirit drie
To mind his daughter's jealousy,
And how it brought him grief and shame
Because so patent to the dame.

The knight was deep in bitter thought
When Bracy there admission sought,
And to his sorrow and dismay
Was gruffly cut and sent away.
This to the minstrel was the drop
Into his overflowing cup;
And sadder than for many a day,
He turned about and went his way.

His deepening gloom did not depart,
And leave an unencumbered heart,
But all the day it grew apace,
And bowed his head and paled his face.
For Christabel he turned to seek,
And when the servants told him eke
That she had to her chamber hied,
And had no longer been espied,

And that in shame and sorrow deep
They had stood without and heard her weep,
His heart, though like a warrior's brave,
Sank deeper, deeper and misgave;
A grief he could not drive away
Clung to his soul throughout the day;—
A prescience that some dark abyss
 Of whelming and chaotic woe,
Cloven by remorseless Nemesis,
 Its greedy maw was opening slow
Beneath the castle in whose close
Dwelt all his hopes and joys and woes.

CONCLUSION TO PART THIRD.

They only who are given to bear
 The burden of a sensitive soul
 Know the full measure of their dole
When through the world they try to fare,
And like their comrades do and dare.
Failing to meet with brazen front
The world's unquailing bale and brunt,
Again they feel their grief's excess
In gibes of their unmanliness.

What wonder is it that, distressed
Beyond the limit of relief,
They leave the gauds that lure to grief,
And, searching every phase of rest,
Find solitude befits them best?
There can they, from all apart,
Let flow the feelings of the heart,
Give free reign to the visions high
That mould the soul to symmetry,
And find in every rolling plain
A stage whereon to ease their pain;
In every grove, in every tree
A patient audience of sympathy,
Thy murmurs but approval mild
To Solitude's distempered child.
The world may whirl its life away
With not an inkling of the joy
They feel who, free from its annoy,
Know the sweet might of Nature's sway;
But well-a-day! and well-a-day!
For those who love the quietude
Of meadow, mountain, stream and wood,
And fain would commune fair and free
With the sweet maid of Poesy,

Yet still are forced the streets to tread
And mix with spirits dull and dead
Who have not sympathy and art
To understand a poet's heart.
Theirs cannot be the kind of woe
By others shared; and well I trow
They must withdraw to mourn apart,
Like Bracy of the gentle heart.

PART FOURTH.

The day moved on with noiseless shoon,
And now had neared the hour of noon.
The air without was warm and whist,
The sun was beaming through a mist
Which let the light but faint and dim,
And made a halo round its rim.
About the castle and around
Were little life and little sound;
For rumors of their master's pet
 To all the occupants had run,
And caused the silence of regret
 As they some injury had done.
Yet this a change did undergo:
Soon trilled a bugle-blast below,
And was admittance given fain
To Aldingar and eke his train,—
The noble knight Sir Aldingar
 Who had plighted his troth to Christabel,—
 The same for whom in the forest dell

She had prayed her prayer the night before.
He had long been gone, and they thought him far
Winning high honors in the war.
But, warfare ended, he had sped
To Christabel unheralded;
And now to others all amorphous,
He met Bard Bracy in the court.
His eyes were bright, his breath came fast
With thrills of blissful antepast;
His glowing features well expressed
The eager tremors in his breast;
And ready queries he applied
About the welfare of his bride.
The minstrel tried to cast aside
All the traces of his gloom,
And answered light the youthful knight,
And led him to the presence room.
“Sir Aldinger,” with suasive tone
He spoke with simulated heart,
“Thy gentle dove hath lately flown
To her apartment far apart;
And I beseech with love sincere
That, since the noontide is so near,
You calm the fears that thee enthrall,

And meet her in the banquet hall.
Her handmaid shall be sent apace
To cite her to the dinner place,
With not a mention of thy name,
And when appears our little dame,
The holy meed
 Of seeing rise
 In her sweet eyes
The spreading impulse of surprise
Will glad our hearts indeed.
Sir Leoline, as well you know,
 Is frail in health and bent and gray;
And, though with pleasure he will glow
When I acquaint him who is here,
 He cannot leave his room to-day.”
Bard Bacy finished, and amain
 A maid was sent for Christabel,
 But soon returned the news to tell
That all persuasion was in vain:
Her mistress was ill, and chose to stay
In her apartment for the day.
And by her fay! the maiden said,
Her mistress’ eyes were large and red,
As though many tears she’d shed.

Such words could not but quickly blight,
The prelibation of the knight,
Though Bracy uttered words of cheer :—
“She would recover and appear,
And perchance they had not done aright
In leaving untold the name of the knight.”

Not long this anxious time did last;
The banquet summons sounded clear,
The Bard assumed an air of cheer,
And, while went on the noon repast,
He sought by a pretended gladness
The slow communicated sadness
To lure from out the passive breasts
Of sympathetic guests.

When over was the banquet, all
Assembled in the lofty hall
Where with his harp of magic tone
The minstrel plied his happy art,
Chanted a ballad of the heart,
And made his passion all their own.

Meanwhile when fell the twilight hour
Fair Geraldine slid from her bower,
And wrapped in mantle long and drear,
Went forth into the starshine clear,—

Accompanied by her thoughts alone,
She wandered forth unseen, unknown.
She raised her features to the skies,
 And the starlight, falling on her face,
 Revealed its beauty and its grace,—
Dark hair, disordered by the gale,
Blown o'er her forehead clear and pale,
Sweet lips of passion where were set
 Lines showing spirit sufferance,
And in her sunken eyes of jet
 A restless, bright and guileful glance.
No tears were trembling in her eyes,
And yet her heart, for all so vain,
Was beating fast in peerless pain.
Far otherwise wrought her distress
Than calming her to gentleness;
For, as she wandered on amain,
Fierce thoughts were coursing in her brain.
To Halegarth wood she took her way,
 And when she saw, inwreathed in gloom,
 Its spectral trees before her loom,
She made no boggling stop or stay:
With head erect, and light, swift gait
Its dark demesne she entered straight.

Geraldine with long dark hair,
And eyes and brow divinely fair,
Endued with seeming gentle grace,
Are not within her maiden breast
Expectant fear and sheer unrest?—
For dark and gloom small care she hath;
Still hied she along her forest path,
When soon she halted and drew back,
And peered into the darkness black.
Her eyes grew wide; loudly she cried

In blended fear and wrath:
“Ah! woman white, again, to-night,
You seek to bar me in my path!
Though thou her guardian angel be,
Though canst not check nor alter me;
I know my soul, I have no fear,
And there's a greater power near!”

The beauteous dame, with flashing eyes,
Sprang past the spot, and onward hies.
Fast, fast her feet the distance mete,
And home impatience goads her soul
To gain the covert of her goal.
What seeks this Geraldine so fair?—
She seeks the grot of Witch's Lair,

(Most unfrequented solitude
In all the round of Halegarth Wood,)
Where in her fell, glum loneliness
Dwells Martha, aged anchoress.

The lonely maiden gazed on high
Where, riding dreamily o'er the sky,
Through clefts of trees looked down the moon
On all that silent scene; and soon
Its pale beams to her vision gave
The rocky entrance of the cave.

Leafy twines of gadding vines
Spread all so mazy o'er the Lair
That people unfamiliar there
Had gazed upon the sylvan spot,
And passed in nescience of the grot.
Geraldine did then dispart
The tangled work of Nature's art,
And, hidden quite from prying sight,
Gave forth a summons from her throat
Not unlike the curlew's note.
From far within an answer came;
She hastened on, the beauteous dame,
And, thridding a passage of damp and gloom,
Emerged into a low-browed room.

At farthest end, a-glowing bright,
A fire shot flickers of lambent light,
And gave the trappings all to sight.

The walls and ceiling, all of ground,
With kip-skin and fells were hung around ;
A mighty cauldron on the fire
Hissed tamely now and now rose higher ;
And, lying low within its glow,
A sly fox did its head uprear ;
A few iron tripods stood anear.

Upon her entrance Geraldine
No person present could divine,
But when her dazzled sight
Had overcome the blinking light,
Her piercing, snake-like eye surveyed
A figure standing in the shade.
“Ah ! Mother Martha, thou art there !
Again I seek thy hidden lair
To tell my efforts and success,
And how I gave the girl distress.”
The aged hag came forth to view :

Her face an hundred wrinkles bore,
Yet straight her form as shaft of yew,
And dark her eyes with magic lore.

“Daughter, seat thyself anear,
And tell what thou wouldst have me hear.”

Round Geraldine, as she stood there,

The woman wrapped her nappy gown,
Then drew the girl to the warming glare,
And close together they sat down.

“Now, Daughter mine, here by the shine
Of the burning cedar tell the whole;

Thou hast a pallid look and wild,

Thou art cold and damp: I ken it, child;—

Some misery sits at the root of thy soul.”

Then Geraldine sought to relate

All her haps since yestere’en;

As she proceeded, fierce and keen

Her eyes ’gan widen and dilate

With sting of old recurring hate,

Till, wrought to passion’s highest key,

She flung her mantle suddenly,

And to her feet instanter rose,

While, rapid as a torrent flows,

Dark words of hatred came and fell

Upon the maiden Christabel.

With admiration in her eyes,

The old witch sat in still surprise.

“O, Mother Martha! knowest thou
What woes my haughty spirit bow?
Though I am wont with studied wiles
To wreath my face in happy smiles,
Before the ball-room’s giddy press
To wear the air of happiness,
And answer blushes to their stare,
Bright as the roses in my hair,
These are but semblances that veil
An endless reach of burning bale.
My heart, my thoughts are never there;
They ever dwell on Aldingar,
The faithless knight who loved me well
Until he met this Christabel,
And left for her the glowing heart
That deemed him of its life the better part.

“I told thee nothing of this woe,
O, Mother, when few nights ago
I came to ask thee how to sate
The gnawing appetite of hate.
I come again, by vengeance backed,
To ask thee further how to act;
Yet know, I have this Christabel
Fast in the clutches of my spell,—

Into my snare with complaisance she fell."

Of mercy naught her spirit weet;
Her wild excitement passed away,
And Geraldine resumed her seat

To hearken Mother Martha's say:
"Thy beauty, Daughter, is complete;
Thy flashing eye and piercing glance
Bespake the high intelligence
Which in thy childish innocence
I knew would bring thee fame and power.
Then wert thou like a woodland flower
Which, girt with gorse and prickly whin,
Seems lovelier for the distance of its kin.
Bereft so early of thy mother,
With not a sister or a brother,
I saw thee often when a child
In seach of blossoms roaming wild;
I met thee often in the dell,
And lured thee to my hidden cell
Where you became acquainted well,
And where I taught thee charm and spell.
Perceiving all thy spirit rare,
I reared thee with a mother's care.
Think not thy love affair to me

Has ever been a mystery ;
Thy love and jealousy I kenned
From the commencement to the end.
The knight for whom thy heart is sore
Is now a warrior no more.
Ha ! start not, Girl, at what I said ;—
I do not mean that he is dead :
This morning near the dawn of light
I held my crystal to my sight,
And saw him riding through the land
Attended by a chosen band.
It seemed that they had traveled far ;
 Close rode behind his retinue,
 And by appearance well I knew
They were returning from the war.
 At noon I took a second view,
And before Sir Leoline's castle tall
He stood, and gave his bugle call.
 “Ay, Daughter, trust me, he is there
In the same castle with his fair,
 And yet because thy snare was laid
 His gentle, unsuspecting maid
Knows nothing of his presence there.
 Art thou for vengeance still athirst?—

'Tis thine, if you obey me first.
To-night in thickest shadows flee
Unto her favorite old oak tree;
Upon its grassy carpet round
With magic circles mark the ground;—
Then by thy magic bold and free
Lure forth this maiden to the tree.
When she is there do thou not shirk
To force her in the charméd cirque,
And,—well, the rest to thee is known,
How this her reason will dethrone,
Destroy her charms for mortal man,
And Love from her forever ban.”

Her thanks the rising maiden gave,
Yet lingered by the anchoress:—
“Where is thy crystal, Mother grave?—
One moment only do I crave

To glance at Christabel’s distress.”
“My crystal, Daughter, do you say?
Alack! it was this very day

When I had ta’en those glances fleet,
It glided from my hands away,
And broke in pieces at my feet.
’Tis bad; ’twill cost me trouble sure

Ere I another can procure.
I would, indeed, I had it now,
For, though I know not why nor how,
My aged breast is sore oppressed
With omen of disaster near;—

But go thy way
Now maiden dear,
And come again to-morrow day.”
Fair Geraldine turned from the light,
And wandered forth into the night.

CONCLUSION TO PART FOURTH.

Methinks it is a gift of love
From that Omniscient Power above
That human fates lie unforeseen
Behind the future's filmy screen,—
That no Cassandra lives to-day
To show the serpent in our way.
What if the bride

Who stands to-night
Aglow with love and pride,
And hears the rite

That links her forever to the side
Of him in whom her hopes abide,
Could antedate the deeps of woe
Which she in after time may know!
What if the mother, in her joy
Crooning to sleep her infant boy,
Might in that hour be given to scan
The degradation of the man!
If in the mid-day of to-morrow
Shall fall the deepest night of sorrow,
Who would desire to see its lower
Steal frowning o'er the Present's hour?
No, let Time keep his wonted way,
And laws of nature hold their sway;
For, after all that hath been said
 In bold decrual of our lot,
I see but wisdom there displayed;—
 If aught be wrong I know it not.

PART FIFTH.

In sun-kissed beauty day had set,

Like a rainbow fading from the sight,
And Night's cerulean coronet

Gleamed with a million points of light.
Soon in the east marked mortal eyes
Diana's golden disc arise

In her blue pathway to begin
Her peaceful journey o'er the skies.

The evening breezes, low and thin,
Passed o'er the wanderer's forehead light,
And in the tree-tops rustled slight,
And seemed like the breathing of a sigh
Which the world might whisper to the sky,
As, sunken deep in the mazes of sleep,
She lay with all her evils hid
Beneath the twilight's coverlid.

'Twas when upon the birchen spray
The nightingale begins her lay,
When from her hiding peeps the fay,

And sees the fairies at their play,—
How upon the green parterre
They trip their morris light and far.

Upon this moonlit prospect dwell
The tearful eyes of Christabel,
As from her couch at eve she came,
And sat down by the casement frame.
Full sad for her had been the day;
It seemed 'twould never pass away,
But now she laid aside her fears,
And let the breezes dry her tears,
Gazed on the nightly beauty calm,
And made the scene her sorrow's balm.
Her soul as quiet grew and clear
As the distant sheet of Wyndermere,
As now on this stilly night it lies

Calm as a mother-bird in her nest,
Repeating in its sleeping breast
The blue dome of the gemmy skies.

She forward leaned, and lightly pressed
Against the sill her peaceful breast,
And looked beyond to where she sees
The green-clad boughs of many trees,
And 'mongst them all the old oak's crest

Like a giant rising o'er the rest.
Long had she loved the forest's king,
And in her childish wandering
Beneath its boughs had stayed to rest,
Had plucked the green moss from its breast,
And better loved each time to stay,
And round its roots to ply her play.
And then she thought how yestereve
 She knelt beneath it in her prayer
 For her absent lover's dear welfare,
And scarcely could her eyes believe
 When she found the grieving damsel there—
Her dreaming ceased, for on her soul
A secret, subtle horror stole
Like that same thrill she felt the morn
Which caused her father's ire and scorn,
When in her fear of Geraldine
Her sire could naught but hate divine.
The maiden drew her in apace,
And sat with damp and whitened face
Until it passed by slow degrees.
 Came not again her former ease.
She rose, and crossed her chamber long
To where her mother's portrait hung,—

The mother whose sweet love and care
Had been denied her daughter fair.
She drew the beamy gauze aside
That scanty did the features hide,
And, gazing at the painting there
Of a lady gentle, sweet and fair,
In soft, contemplative distress
Stood the maiden motherless.
Some words she murmured faint and low :—

“How often, O, my mother dear,
Have I come hither in my woe,
And felt thy very self anear.

A holy solace seems to rise
From out those gentle-painted eyes,
Thy soft-drawn lips about to speak
A mother’s love to my spirit weak.
For all his brusque and pettish ways
My father loves me well, I trow;
Yet would he knew as thou wouldst know
To shed the meed I often need
Of words of love and looks of praise.
I would, O mother, thou wert here
My longing and my grief to hear.
Then might I rest against thy breast

My heart so lone and weary oft,
And listen to thee speaking soft
The words of tender sympathy
I have so longed to hear from thee."

There came a brief and silent spell
Till the maiden Christabel
Replaced the veil the portrait o'er,
And to the window came once more.

Upon the moon she turned her gaze,
And long regarded its yellow haze

As on it crept;
Gone was her feeling of deep dread;
Upon her arm she laid her head,
And slept.

Ay, she is sleeping, sleeping now;
Peace lies upon her lily brow
Where through the day the seal of pain
Had marked the keenness of its reign.
The soft pulsations of the air
Wooed the light ringlets of her hair,
And whispered love-tones in her ear.
Ah! why, instead, with tocsin knell
Did it not waken Christabel
To knowledge of the toils anear,

Ere round her unsuspecting heart
Were woven the meshes of black art?

Sleep still held its lulling spell
Till midnight struck the castle bell,
And then it was that Christabel
Regained her senses with a start.
She felt a horror round her heart,
Within her brain a pulsing flame
That slowly spread through all her frame;
A longing for the old oak stole
Upon her acquiescent soul;
And all the while she never wist
This fascination to resist.

“Mary mother, guard me well,”
Crossing herself, said Christabel,
And put her mantle on withal,
And lightly stole into the hall,
And swiftly onward doth she fare
Till came she to the courtyard soon;
All was asleep and silent there,
In the dim glimmer of the moon
All was asleep and silent? Nay;
List to that angry yell and bay
Which from her kennel sitting near

The mastiff bitch gave half in fear!
O, what can ail the aged hound
To give forth such an angry sound,
To utter bay and utter yell
In presence of sweet Christabel
Who ever cared for it so well?—

The startled damsel hastened on,
And crossed the moat and passed the lawn,
And reached the edge of the old greenwood,
And there in hesitancy stood
Bethinking then that not an eye
Her timid wandering might spy,
In the gloomy forest wandered she
To the huge, broad-breasted old oak tree.

But well I wis she thought amiss
In trusting that the shades of night
Concealed her course from human sight;
For from above the minstrel bard
Of all her actions made regard.
His ominous anxieties
Had driven slumber from his eyes,
And while he tossed and sleepless lay
He heard the mastiff's angry bay;
And, thinking deeply on the cause

Arose and from his window peered,
When lo! he saw his mistress pause,
And glance around as if she feared
The hall might wake that baying weird.
Jesu Maria! what did she there,
His mistress so tender, young and fair?
While on the maiden he looked long,
The ugly dreams of yester night
Came back upon him in a throng,
And filled his soul with dread and fright.
Sure some magician's evil charm
Was trolling Christabel to harm;
And when he saw her disappear
He straight resolved to follow her.
Out into the night air free
Crept the minstrel noiselessly,
And hastened after Christabel;
But when he reached the greenwood fair
He looked about and could not tell
At what point she had entered there.
Yet 'twas no time for vain delay,
And so he entered anyway.
Dark rose the trees, save here and there
The moonbeams blinked through branches bare.

Bard Bracy stood and listened well
To hear a sound of Christabel;—
Instead, there came unto his ear
A noise that filled his breast with fear,—
A low, dead roar that slowly died
Ran through the wood from side to side;
Dark shapes arose as if in wrath,
And seemed to flit before his path.
Unused to scenes so dread and wild,
The minstrel trembled like a child,
 And turning from these visions black,
 Unto the castle hastened back
There to procure his harp so mild,
The music of whose dancing strings
Could break the charm of evil things,
And there to seek Sir Aldingar
Whom, bred to grisly sights of war,
No black illusions could debar.
There he arrived in hasty plight,
Possessed his harp and roused the knight
Who, armed with sword and purpose grim,
Heard the Bard's tale and followed him
Fleet could they speed along the way
When Christabel in danger lay,

And vengeance did her lover swear
On those who harmed one silken hair.

Bard Bracy knew she often played
Beneath the oak's inviting shade.

They reached the forest speedily,
And sped toward the old oak tree.
Despite the noises on the blast,
Dark shapes and sights that held aghast
The knight and minstrel onward passed;
And thus had they but shortly sped
Till they perceived the oak ahead.

But Jesu! what was lying there?

Sweet Christabel in the dim moonshine
Lay pallid on the frightened grass,

And o'er her hovered Geraldine.

With dark, fierce words and gestures wild
The dame stood o'er the maiden child,
And far the fury of her soul
Had passed the portal of control.

The men stood speechless, till at last

In wild excitement spoke the knight:

"See you that woman in our sight?

I have known her in the past.

I loved her once, but found too well

She knew and used the arts of hell.
O! she has murdered Christabel,
And I alone will dole her meed:—
Vengeance, vengeance for the deed!”
He drew his blade without a sound,
And reached the fury at a bound.
“Nay, wait!” Bard Bracy cried in fright,
And sought to check the wayward knight;
Too late the impulse to arrest,
The dagger pierced her shrinking breast,
And Geraldine in death-fit fell
Beside unconscious Christabel.

An awful spell of silence came,
And damped the heat of passion's flame,
Led Mercy in to intercede,
And make them realize their deed.
The men looked down on the damsel slain,
Till turning from the sight of pain,
The minstrel bent him o'er his maid,
His hand upon her forehead laid,
And cried with streaming eyes and wet:
“O! haste thou, she is breathing yet,
We'll bear her to the castle fleet,
And the leech may save our maiden sweet!”

Hasted the knight, and both with care
The swooning maiden onward bare.

“That I should find thee in this plight,

When after absence long and wide,

I came to claim thee for my bride!”

With broken manhood sobbed the knight.

The castle reached, the pallid maid

Upon a downy couch was laid,

And soon each far apartment through

The doleful rumor wailing flew.

Fast ran the menials here and there

To summon leech or cordial bear.

Sir Leoline came, and stood beside,

And saw recourses vainly tried;

The feeble flicker of his heart

Seemed also ready to depart

When on his maiden’s white, cold face

Death’s blighting finger he could trace.

The leech had said the hand of death

Was surely pressing out her breath.

Soon from the lips of Christabel

Some faint words on the silence fell,

And holding down his eager ear,

Her father seemed these words to hear:

'O, father, I am cold to-night;
Nay, stay beside me, for I fear
I cannot bide much longer here!
There swims before my clouded sight
A form of grace, a face of light,
And much I fear 'tis *she* again
Seeking to give me deeper pain.
Yet no,—she nears,—she nears me still;
She cannot have intentions ill,—
Her features smiles of love assume,
And now they bear resemblance fair
To that dear portrait in my room.
She comes to claim her Christabel,—
My mother!—it is she—farewell!"
Keen was the stinging of the dart
That quivered in the old man's heart,
As on her brow a kiss he pressed,
And turned aside with heaving breast
And muttered, "Broken every tie;
Gone, gone, my child!—Now let me die."
There were lamentations sore,
And the castle, gay of yore,
Was desolate forevermore.
In few days the chapel bell

Tolled the moaning funeral knell
Of the maiden Christabel,
As in the twilight's star-lit gloom
They bore her to the ancient tomb,
And laid her there in peace to bide
Close by her gentle mother's side.

CONCLUSION TO PART FIFTH.

Already meseemeth we have fared
Too far into the Vale of Woe;—
The sky is dark, the ground is bared,
The leaf is stricken from the bough,
And who that once has known the cheer
Of Spring's lush beauty and glowing guise
Would care to dwell and linger here
When yonder away are balmy skies?—
Yet few words more, and I am fain
To close at last my tale of pain.
Few words indeed have I to write
Of how Sir Leoline the knight
Anon laid by the bale of life,
And in another world of light

Sought his sweet daughter and gentle wife,
And eke of how by dim moonshine
Beautiful, wayward Geraldine
Was borne on Mother Martha's breast
To Halegarth Wood, and laid to rest.

Her father, when told, sought out apace,
The secret of her resting-place,
And, kneeling on the little mound,
Shed not a tear, moaned not a sound :
The memories of her waywardness
Were seared too deeply to express.
But did he, ere he passed away,
Renew with Leoline old and gray
The friendship broken long ago?—

I know not, for no legends tell ;
But God knows well how frangible
Are all our moorings here below,
And, though we wail and strive amain
Against the frequency of pain,
Yet, looking deeply, we must know
How wise the plan that makes to flow
Due consequences from a wrong :
Therein are we made free and strong.
About the castle, where of yore

Through mazy wild and palmy more
Christabel had wandered free
In childish innocence and glee,
Hovered a ghostly Presence there,
Like the lank spectre of Despair.
Yet sometimes when at eventide
Time stilly ran as a brooklet's glide,
And smiled the spacèd stars above
With the benignancy of love,
Adown the grassy avenue
That, seldom trodden now, led through
The bloom-white thicket's dewy gloom
To where stood waiting the marble tomb,
A figure, slight of make and tread,
With trembling steps and bended head,
And circling crown of floating hair,
Had been seen to wander there.
Aye to the tomb it wandered clear,
Then seemed to flit and disappear;
While ever to those who lent an ear
On the gale came swimming sweetly faint
The notes of a bosom-wringing plaint.
Peasants who chanced to stray anear
Had turned away in doubt and fear,

For it was said that spirits white
Came thronging eager in the night
 In that sweet dell
 To sing and tell
Of their departed Christabel.
I doubt not but their simple wit
Enlarged the truth in spreading it :
The figure was the Bard's alone,
 Bracy disconsolate and forlorn,
 Who oft at eve and early morn
Brought swelling buds and roses blown
To deck the tomb's unfeeling stone,
While he poured his unavailing moan.

And now that we are nearly through,
The moral, you may say, is due,—
That for the dolours we have passed
Some lesson we must draw at last
To make the pages worth a reading.

Without restriction I this view
Cannot accept as worthy heeding :
The subtle Spirit of Romance
Brooks charily a probing glance ;
Before the philosophic gaze
It steals away like morning haze ;

And now, as vulture with its prey,
To vivisect my tender lay,
And take its glamour all away
Would, were such desecration tried,
Rob my heart of its parental pride.
The prosiest days of all our life
With speaking apologues are rife,
And like the hidden growth of seed,
Their good is molded deed
Not when as stated apothegms,
Polished like lapidary gems,
They are repeated o'er and o'er
As tedious pedagogic lore,
But when, as still, implied effect,
Growing ever, though often checked,
They rouse in the unreflecting breast
 An aspiration to attain
 A larger clear, a higher plane,
Often dreamed but ne'er possessed.

ON A PORTRAIT OF KEATS.

Long had I followed with enraptured eyne
Endymion sadly roaming bosk and dell,
Drunk deep the pain of tender Isabel,
And fond belief of love-lorn Madeline;
Had felt the fear and heard the tones divine
That shook the welkin when the Titans fell,
And longed amid the fascinating spell
To see the forger of these fancies fine.
And now I gaze upon the brow's broad room,
The lips of passion and the musing eyes,
Dark with the prescience of approaching doom,
Or wide with sting of fleeing enemies,
And feel, O Keats, a sentience of thy gloom,
Whence heart-born, self-excluding thoughts arise.

ON A MAY MORNING IN THE WOODLAND.

Sweet morn of May, thy spirit in the air
Breathes its proverbial glory o'er the earth,
And joys in the ubiquitary birth
Of old emotions, now grown new and rare.
Low sleeps the tiger Passion in his lair,
While o'er the greening plain of Peace and Grace
Lamb-fleeced fancies roam from place to place,
And ruminate the Flower-existence there.
Now is the swarm of Irritations slain;
They perished as I fled the city's taint,
And in this spot, baring my breast amain,
I woo Love back into my spirit faint.
Here dwells Religion, here its truest fane,
And here I still all pipings of complaint.

PLATONIC LOVE.

I followed Love into a narrow dale,
 Steep, lone, secluded, where I found abode
 The One whose presence in my dreams had glowed;
In her sweet eyes I read the mutual tale.
For long we dwelt alone in that sweet pale
 Bathed in the stream of joy that round us flowed,
 Until Love came again, and forth we yode
To a high mountain on his guiding trail.
Beneath us lay a wide expanse of plain
 In soothing, soft, time-chastened colors dressed;
Hither and thither mixing, ran amain
 A mass of people, filling each his hest,
And lo! no longer drew they my disdain,
 But all stirred kindly feelings in my breast.

THE VALE OF REST.

(From the German of Uhland.)

When the sun sinks in the west,
And, like Alps against the glow,
Mountain-domed the cloud-groups show,
I have asked with tears in eyes,
“O, among them yonder lies
My longed-for Vale of Rest?”

THE ROSE GARDEN.

(From the German of Uhland.)

Of a beautiful rose garden
I will sing to thee and tell
How ladies at morning roamed thro' it,
At eve how heroes fought and fell.
"My lord is king in the land,
I rule in this garden of roses;
He chose the golden crown,
And I the wreath of posies.
"And list, ye three young warders,
Dear to my soul ye are,
Let tender maidens enter,
But knights, I charge, debar.
"They might destroy the roses,
And then I should be forlorn."
So spake the beautiful queen
As she wandered there one morn.

Then before the gate resounded
The faithful warders' treads;
The roses gave out their perfume,
And nodded their lovely heads.

And there came along the highway
Three tender maidens dear:
"Ye warders, three dear warders,
Prithee let us enter here!"

As the maidens broke them roses
Their surprise was great exceeding:
"Have the little roses stuck us?
Else why are our fingers bleeding?"

And before the gate resounded
The faithful warders' treads;
The roses gave out their perfume,
And nodded their lovely heads.

Then along the road on horses
Three impudent knights did ride:
"Ye warders, three base warders,
Haste ye and open wide!"

"The gate, it shall stay shut,
Our swords they are bare and brown,

The roses they are dear,
And your horses might trample them down!"

Then fought the knights and warders
And the knights won the bloody fray;
Like the roses the warders were crushed,
And together they dying lay.

And at evening came the queen
Roaming the garden thro':
"And are my roses trampled,
And slain my warders true?

"Then on rose leaves in the earth
I will lay them peacefully;
And where the rose garden flourished
Shall the lily garden be.

"And who will watch my lilies
As faithfully as they?
By night the stars and moon,
And the glorious sun by day."

TO PHYLLIS.

(From the Dutch of Jacobus Bellamy.)

Happy the man who, lacking feeling,
Has never shed the tears of grief,
Who, proof to every keen disaster,
Can steel his heart's unmanliness.

Ah! were my heart but so unfeeling,
I should be happy then!
No tears would then on my cheeks glisten:
I should be happy then!

Yet does the fountain of our pleasure
Spring from unfeelingness?

Ah! no; the fount of truest pleasure
Is in a feeling heart.

Well, then, my tears, flow on, flow on!
Emotion's tears ye are;
In hearts impassible and stolid
True greatness never lives.

Who is it yonder diffidently
Following his wife to the grave?
No tears swim in his eyes malicious,
His bosom heaves no sigh.
Was his wife to her sex a blemish?
Was she untrue to him?
The image she of Love and Virtue,
And fame of womanhood.
He, all unconscious of the beauty
Of Virtue, Love and Faith,
Last upon earth the greatest treasure,
And never knew its worth.
So then, flow on, flow on, my tears,
My heart's true witnesses!
Far liefer would I be unhappy
Than so unfeeling be.

VERSELETS.

Kind ladies have often endeavored
To break my doltish phlegm,
And lure me into reading
My writings aloud to them.

But I am a modest fellow
Without pretense or sham,
And don't just like that manner
Of showing how brave I am.

Little maiden, stay a little,
 Wait and hear me, I implore;
I have found what it is that draws them.
 Thy lovers gallant and galore:

They love thy lands and rhino;
 I love thy heart inside,
For that, I am told, is a jewel,
 And jewels are my pride.

OTHER POEMS.

In moments of humble sadness
Of repentance I am fain.
And straightway of my comrades
Beg forgiveness once again.

For often on slight provocations
Bad words I up and say:
However by some exalted
I am moulded of mortal clay.

And then I am a poet
Of the usual freaky cast,
And of all lackadaisical liars
Believe the poet last.

LINES.

Shalt thou not mourn because thy early days
Were made the target of thick-thronging woes?
Shalt thou not bitterly revert to them,
And, by comparing thy restricted path
With the wild sweet freedom incident to youth,
Bewail thy shorn lot? Where is the result,
The recompense for that untimely blight?
One voice within me queried thus; the tone
Was siren, suave, alluring me to think
As it suggested. Soon another voice
Rose up to answer. Now the tone was grave,
Void of caresses, plain, and modulated
To one low pitch of sameness. It replied:
“Woo not illusion; let me undeceive thee.
Thou hadst denials, hadst bestowals, too.
Methinks that wild, sweet freedom, were it thine
In earlier days, had sent thee racing far
Beyond due limits. Thick thy way was strewn

With shards and shatter, but at intervals
Did not fair flowerets spring and offer up
Their humble redolence to freshen thee?
Forget not how that Sorrow, thoughtful-eyed,
And pale-browed, mother of Reflection, came,
And, standing by thee, from her moulded lips
Shed the sweet lore that none but she can teach."

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